

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

AID-20 PC-04 NIC-01 RSR-01 /115 W

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P R 102052Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3219

INFO USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 5944

E.O... 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJ: DEVELOPING ELECTORAL SCENE

REF: A) BA-5597; B) BA-5098

1. SUMMARY: AT THIS POINT, ON THE EVE OF THE RECONVENING OF THE UCR NATIONAL CONVENTION, THE ELECTORAL SCENE IS IN A HIGH STATE OF UNCERTAINTY. IT NOW SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT THERE WILL BE A PERON-BALBIN TICKET, THOUGH ONE CANNOT YET RULE OUT THAT POSSIBILITY. PERON HIMSELF HAS NOT YET ACCEPTED THE JUSTICIALIST CANDIDACY, BUT PROBABLY WILL DO SO SHORTLY. ISABEL'S CANDIDACY IS BEING TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY NOW THAN IMMEDIATELY AFTER HER NOMINATION. SHE MAY INDEED STAY ON THE TICKET. THE FINAL COMPOSITION OF THE UCR TICKET IS ANYONE'S GUESS. BALBIN IS THE MOST LIKELY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, BUT EVEN THAT IS NOT CERTAIN AND THERE ARE AT LEAST A HALF DOZEN POSSIBLE RUNNING MATES. INDEED, WHILE THERE SEEMS NO LOGICAL ALTERNATIVE TO POPULAR ELECTIONS AT THIS POINT, THERE ARE STILL MANY WHO BELIEVE THEY WILL NOT BE HELD. END SUMMARY.

2. THE UCR--RICARDO BALBIN YESTERDAY STATED FLATLY THAT HIS PARTY WILL RUN ITS OWN SLATE OF CANDIDATES ON SEPT 23--I.E. THERE WILL BE NO JOINT TICKET WITH THE PERONISTS. AN ELEMENT OF DOUBT REMAINS, EVEN SO--IF ONLY BECAUSE MOST OBSERVERS SEEM TO AGREE THAT A PERON--BALBIN TICKET WOULD HAVE BEEN THE MOST LOGICAL ONE

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AND THE BEST FOR THE COUNTRY. IT IS FAR MORE LIKELY, NONETHELESS,

THAT WHEN THE UCR CONVENTION RECONVENES ON AUG 11, IT WILL NOMINATE AN ALL-UCR TICKET. BALBIN IS THE MOST PROBABLE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. OTHERS HAVE BEEN MENTIONED, HOWEVER, AND BALBIN IS DEMANDING A FREE HAND TO RUN A CONCILIATORY CAMPAIGN, AN IDEA WHICH DOES NOT APPEAL TO ALL RADICALES. A SURPRISE CANDIDATE CANNOT BE RULED OUT. THE CHOICE OF VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IS WIDE OPEN. LUIS LEON, VICTOR MARTINEZ, EDUARDO ANGELOZ AND ANTONIO TROCCOLI ARE ONLY A FEW OF THE NAMES MENTIONED. A BALBIN-ALFONSIN SLATE WOULD BE THE STRONGEST VOTE-GETTER THE UCR COULD PUT IN THE FIELD. THEY PROBABLY WOULD NOT GOVERN WELL TOGETHER, BUT SINCE THEY HAVE VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE OF WINNING, THAT IS NOT A PROBLEM. THEY MIGHT DO BETTER THAN THE 22 PERCENT SCORED BY THE UCR IN MARCH. MANY OF THE RADICALES ARE NOT SANGUINE OVER THEIR PROSPECTS, EVEN WITH A BALBIN-ALFONSIN TICKET, AND WOULD REALLY PREFER THAT THE ELECTIONS BE HELD IN THE CONGRESS RATHER THAN BY POPULAR VOTE (SEE BELOW).

3. THE FAILURE OF A PERONIST-UCR SLATE TO MATERIALIZE IS NOT BELIEVED TO RESULT FROM EXCESSIVE DEMANDS ON THE PART OF THE UCR. INDEED, THE MATTER APPEARS NEVER TO HAVE GOTTEN TO THE STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS. SEVERAL WELL-INFORMED RADICALES HAVE TOLD US THAT FAR FROM MAKING DEMANDS AT THEIR LAST MEETING, BALBIN INDIRECTLY SUGGESTED TO PERON THAT AS THERE WAS STILL NO OFFER FORTHCOMING FROM THE LATTER, THE UCR WOULD HAVE TO RUN ITS OWN TICKET. PERON DID NOT OBJECT.

4. THE PERONISTS: PERON STILL HAS NOT OFFICIALLY ACCEPTED THE CANDIDACY, BUT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAS THE APPROVAL OF HIS DOCTORS TO DO SO (WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT BE TRUE). HE IS EXPECTED TO INDICATE HIS ACCEPTANCE DURING A VISIT TO THE CGT ON AUGUST 13. THERE ARE PERSISTENT REPORTS, HOWEVER, THAT HE MAY INDICATE SOMEONE ELSE AS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND HIMSELF BECOME THE HEAD OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE HE HAS PROPOSED TO THE OTHER PARTIES (SEE BA-5597). THIS IS UNLIKELY, BUT IN THIS SITUATION EVEN THE MOST UNLIKELY DEVELOPMENT CANNOT BE RULED OUT. ISABEL DE PERON HAS INDICATED SHE WILL ACCEPT AND NOT RENOUNCE THE VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY. MANY STILL EXPECT HER TO RESIGN AT THE LAST MOMENT IN FAVOR OF SOME PERONIST FIGURE SUCH AS JUSTICE MINISTER ANTONIO BENITEZ OR SENATOR JOSE MARTIARENA. PREVAILING OPINION WITHIN THE MOVEMENT AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, IS THAT SHE

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WILL RUN. THE RATIONALE GIVEN IS THAT PERON IS CONCERNED OVER THE SUCCESSION ISSUE BUT IS NOT YET READY TO SOLVE IT. HENCE, ISABEL WILL BECOME HIS VICE PRESIDENT; HE WILL THEN, IN TIME, REORGANIZE THE PERONIST MOVEMENT AND DESIGNATE A SUCCESSOR. ISABEL WOULD PROBABLY THEN RESIGN. CERTAINLY SHE WOULD NEVER SERVE AS PRESIDENT; RATHER, IN EVENT OF PERON'S DEATH SHE WOULD BE REQUIRED TO RESIGN AND CALL ELECTIONS

5. THIS IS ALL VERY WELL, BUT IT LEAVES THE COUNTRY MORE OR LESS WHERE IT IS NOW. IT NEITHER PAVES THE WAY FOR A SMOOTH TRANSITION IN EVENT OF PERON'S DEATH, NOR CONTRIBUTES TO THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE MOVEMENT. WHETHER ISABEL'S CANDIDACY IS SIMPLY A TEMPORARY PLOY TO STALL FOR TIME BEFORE THE AUGUST 24 DEADLINE, OR WHETHER SHE WILL IN FACT RUN, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT PERON IS CALLING THE TUNE. RUMORS THAT ISABEL AND LOPEZ REGA ENGINEERED HER CANDIDACY WITHOUT PERON'S KNOWLEDGE OR CONSENT ALMOST CERTAINLY REPRESENT NOTHING MORE THAN THE WISHFUL THINKING OF THE PAIR'S POLITICAL ENEMIES.

6. WHATEVER THE FINAL COMPOSITION OF THE PERONIST SLATE, THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO DOUBT THAT IT WILL WIN THE ELECTIONS HANDILY. THE ONLY QUESTION MARK IS WHETHER PERON CAN GET MORE VOTES THAN CAMPORA'S NEAR 50 PERCENT IN MARCH. THE CHANCES ARE THAT HE CAN. HE HAS ALIENATED A PERCENTAGE OF THE LEFTIST AND YOUTH VOTE, BUT TO COMPENSATE FOR THAT IS THE GROWING CONVICTION IN THE COUNTRY THAT PERON, LIKE HIM OR NOT, IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE SOLUTION AT THIS POINT IN ARGENTINA'S HISTORY.

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 5944

7. FREJULI: INTERESTINGLY, IT IS SIMPLY ASSUMED THAT THE OTHER PARTIES OF THE FREJULI WILL GO ALONG WITH THE PERONIST TICKET. TO DATE, THERE HAS BEEN NO FREJULI CONVENTION AND THERE IS NO FREJULI CANDIDATE. THE PERON-ISABELITA TICKET WAS NOMINATED WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE ALLIANCE. THEY EITHER TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT.

8. THE LEFT: THERE IS NOT YET A VIABLE CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT, AND NONE MAY EMERGE. JUAN CORAL OF THE PST HAS THROWN HIS HAT INTO THE RING BUT IS NOT LIKELY TO GET MORE THAN A SPRINKLING OF VOTES. HE IS DOGMATIC AND HAS NO POTENTIAL MASS BASE. THERE IS SOME POSSIBILITY THAT AUGUSTIN TOSCO IN CORDOBA MAY LAUNCH HIS OWN CANDIDACY. HE HAS NO PARTY OR ORGANIZATION AND THERE IS LITTLE TIME TO PUT THEM TOGETHER. SHOULD HE RUN, HE WOULD BECOME BY DEFAULT THE CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT AND WHILE HE MIGHT NOT GET MORE THAN 5 TO 10 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, HE WOULD CUT INTO THE PERONIST PERCENTAGE AND GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

9. THE RIGHT: MANRIQUE WILL RUN AND WILL TRY TO ESTABLISH HIMSELF AS "THE OPPOSITION"--ESPECIALLY IN THE EVENT OF A "PATSY" CAMPAIGN BETWEEN THE UCR AND PERONISTS. HE IS, NEVERTHELESS, LIKELY TO GET FEWER VOTES THAN THE ALMOST 15 PERCENT HE SCORED IN MARCH.

10. FOR ITS PART, NUEVA FUERZA STILL HAS NOT OFFICIALLY ENTERED THE RACE AND MAY NOT DO SO. IT HAD EARLIER BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT  
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ALVARO ALSOGARAY AND EMILIO HARDOY MIGHT BE ITS CANDIDATES. THE YOUTH WING OF NUEVA FUERZA HAS DENOUNCED THEIR CANDIDACIES, HOWEVER, AND EVEN OLDER MEMBERS HAVE EXPRESSED GRAVE DOUBTS AS TO THE WISDOM OF ENTERING THE RACE.

11. FOR VARIOUS REASONS, MANY HOPE ELECTIONS WILL NOT BE HELD AT ALL, SOME SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE THE SITUATION IS URGENT AND THAT THERE IS NO TIME FOR ELECTIONS. AS INDICATED ABOVE, THE UCR, NOT EXPECTING TO FARE WELL, IS LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC. BALBIN HAS PUBLICLY INDICATED HE WOULD SUPPORT THE IDEA OF ELECTIONS BY THE CONGRESS RATHER THAN BY POPULAR VOTE. SOME PERONISTS, TOO, WOULD FAR PREFER TO HAVE THE CONGRESS ELECT PERON RATHER THAN GOING TO POPULAR ELECTIONS--ESPECIALLY IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT THAT PERON CAN TURN OUT A BIGGER VOTE THAN CAMPORA. ALL THESE PRESSURES NOTWITHSTANDING, HOWEVER, IT WOULD SEEM VERY DIFFICULT TO FIND A WAY AROUND POPULAR ELECTIONS AT THIS LATE DATE. THE LAW ON SUCCESSION CAN EASILY BE CHANGED, BUT THE CONSTITUTION ITSELF CALLS FOR ELECTIONS; HENCE, TO OBTAIN THE LEGAL REQUIREMENT, IT WOULD PROBABLY BE NECESSARY TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION- AND TAMPERING WITH THE CONSTITUTION IS A TOUCHY MATTER, ESPECIALLY AFTER ALL THE ASSURANCES OF THE PERONISTS THAT THEY WOULD RESPECT IT. MOREOVER, THE WIDER THE OPPOSITION, THE MORE DIFFICULT IT BECOMES TO HANDLE THE MATTER IN CONGRESS. MANRIQUE, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD CERTAINLY CRY FOUL IF AN EFFORT WERE MADE TO ELECT THE PRESIDENT BY CONGRESSIONAL RATHER THAN POPULAR VOTE.

12. THE FINAL IRONY OF THE COMING ELECTIONS IS THAT THEY WILL BE STRUCTURED BY THE ELECTORAL LAW ISSUED BY THE LANUSSE GOVT TO COVER THE MARCH 11 ELECTIONS. EARLIER, THE PERONISTS HAD DENOUN-

CED THIS LAW AS UNFAIR. ORIGINALLY, THEY HAD INTENDED TO SCRAP IT AND GO BACK TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION (SEE BA-5098). FURTHER REFLECTION, HOWEVER, INDICATED THAT WOULD RAISE MORE PROBLEMS THAN IT WOULD SOLVE. IT WOULD HAVE MEANT, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE ENTIRE CONGRESS WOULD HAVE BEEN SERVING FOR A FOUR YEAR TERM WHILE THE PRESIDENT, ELECTED SOME FOUR MONTHS LATER, WOULD BE SERVING FOR SIX YEARS. EVENTUALLY, AND RELUCTANTLY, IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT THERE WAS NOTHING FOR IT BUT TO USE THE OLD LANUSSE LAW.

13. COMMENT: THE ELECTORAL SCENE IS STILL TAKING SHAPE. AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE ANY LASTING SOLUTION FLOWING  
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FROM IT. AS SOME HAVE DESCRIBED IT, THE ARGENTINE POLITICAL PROCESS IS BEGINNING TO RESEMBLE A NUCLEAR REACTION WHICH SOMEHOW NEVER REACHES CRITICAL MASS. IT JUST GOES ON AND ON.

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